

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3628

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2241

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJ: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS

REFS: (A) STATE 86289 (B) PANAMA 2095

SUMMARY: THE PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS TO CONGRESS APRIL 10 HAS PROMPTED NO OFFICIAL COMMENT AND RELATIVELY LITTLE EDITORIAL REACTION. WUVH REGARD TO POSSIBLE IMPACT HERE OF EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE JUDGE THAT THE GOP HAS NOT YET ASSESSED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS ON ITS OWN INTERESTS AND WILL NOT DO SO UNTIL INTERNAL U.S. REACTION HAS CLEARLY EMERGED. IN THE MEANWHILE, THERE WILL LIKELY BE CONCERN THAT U.S. STAND ON THE CANAL ISSUE MIGHT TOUGHEN AS A RESULT OF ITS ASIA REVERSES.

1. PRESIDENT FORD'S APRIL 10 FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS, PRINCIPALLY FOCUSED ON CONCERNS ELSEWHERE, HAS EVOKED RELATIVELY LITTLE REACTION. GOP OFFICIALS HAVE NOT COMMENTED ON THE ADDRESS AND EDITORIAL REACTION, WHILE CRITICAL, HAS NOT BEEN EXTENSIVE. PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES, LARGELY IN DEFERENCE TO THE ONGOING CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, ARE NOT WONT TO TAKE PUBLIC POSITIONS ON SUCH STATEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS AND NONE ARE ANTICIPATED IN THIS INSTANCE.

2. EDITORIALY, THE PRSIDENT'S REMARKS CONCERNING LATIN AMERICA AND THE CIA, RATHER THAN EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WERE OF PRIMARY INTEREST. CALL FOR ELIMINATION OF TRADE  
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ACT AMENDMENT EXCLUDING ECUADOR AND VENEZUELA FROM GENERALIZED

PREFERENCE BENEFITS WAS VIEWED BY GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PANAMA-AMERICA'S APRIL 13 "PULSO DE PANAMA" COLUMN AS TRIUMPH FOR LATIN AMERICAN UNITY, WITHOUT WHICH IN ITS VIEW THE U.S. WOULD NOT HAVE FELT COMPELLED TO SEEK REPEAL OF OFFENSIVE AMENDMENT. FOR ITS PART, CRITICA ON APRIL 14 ATTACKED EDITORIALY THE PRESIDENT'S DEFENSE OF THE CIA. PANAMA-AMERICA'S OFTEN CAUSTIC, USUALLY ANTI-U.S. JOAQUIN BELENO, IN HIS APRIL 15 COLUMN, SHARPLY REJECTED PRESIDENT'S ASSERTION OF U.S. FRIENDSHIP FOR LATIN AMERICANS, TERMING THE U.S., BY ITS RECORD OF INTERVENTIONS, THE "TRUE ENEMY" OF LATIN AMERICA.

3. WITH RESPECT TO IMPACT OF EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ON PANAMANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. POLICY, WE BELIEVE INTERNAL U.S. REACTION WILL TELL THE STORY. ON THE ONE HAND, EVER CONCERNED THAT RESOLUTION OF THE "PANAMA PROBLEM" BE ACCORDED PRIORITY STATUS BY U.S. POLICY MAKERS, THE GOP WILL BE ACUTELY SENSITIVE TO INDICATIONS THAT OUR PROBLEMS ELSEWHERE MIGHT WEAKEN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH'S RESOLVE TO DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENT TO NEGOTIATE A NEW CANAL TREATY. U.S. PRESS SPECULATION (REF B) THAT FOREIGN POLICY REVERSES WERE CREATING SITUATION IN WHICH U.S. PUBLIC OPINION WOULD NOT TOLERATE YIELDING OF CANAL ZONE TO PANAMA HAS ALREADY PROVOKED SHARP EDITORIAL REACTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, PANAMA WILL BE ALERT TO SIGNS THAT THE U.S., IN SEARCH OF ACHIEVEMENTS TO OFFSET ITS ASIAN REVERSES, IS ANXIOUS TO STRENGTHEN ITS RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA. IT IS PREMATURE TO TELL WHETHER THE GOP HAS CONCLUDED THAT THE U.S. WILL EMERGE FROM ITS PRESENT DIFFICULTIES AS A TOUGHER ANTAGONIST OR MORE GENEROUS PARTNER OF PANAMA AND LATIN AMERICA. GOP OFFICIALS WE HAVE SEEN SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS HAVE OFFERED NO COMMENT OR REACTION, AND WE JUDGE THE GOP HAS NOT YET ASSESSED THE IMPLACTIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEVELOPMENTS ON ITS OWN INTENTS. HOW THE U.S. ITSELF REACTS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE THE DECISIVE FACTOR, AND THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN.  
JORDEN

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